



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

**Testimony of The Humane Society of the United States
By Jill Fritz, Michigan State Director
In Opposition to H.B. 5127 & H.B. 5128
Presented to the House Agriculture Committee
June 24, 2009**

On behalf of The Humane Society of the United States (The HSUS) and our more than 361,000 supporters in Michigan, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to H.B. 5127 and H.B. 5128, bills that were just introduced yesterday. My name is Jill Fritz and I am the Michigan State Director for The HSUS.

The HSUS has sought to engage in dialogue with the agricultural community in Michigan for the last several months about the humane treatment of farm animals. Our hope is that we will be able to continue that dialogue and work cooperatively with the state's farming leaders—both large and small—in collaboratively advancing animal welfare.

Unfortunately, these bills do not accomplish that goal. They are little more than a handout to Big Agribusiness interests in the state, seeking to codify inhumane industry standards for the treatment of farm animals—standards that allow many animals to spend the majority of their lives in cages so small they can't even turn around or extend their limbs. I respectfully urge you to oppose these bills, but to support efforts aimed at increasing dialogue that could lead to a more inclusive and progressive approach.

H.B. 5128 -- Animal Care Advisory Council

H.B. 5128 would give a council dominated by agribusiness interests the ability to set welfare standards for animals on factory farms—poor public policy and an obvious attempt to thwart meaningful reform. Rather than allowing the foxes to guard the henhouse, I urge the legislature to reject this attempted power grab and encourage open dialogue on the issue of farm animal welfare in Michigan.

H.B. 5127 -- Codifying Industry Standards

H.B. 5127 goes even farther, granting the Department of Agriculture the sole authority to regulate farm animal health and welfare, and requiring the Department to adopt current industry standards—including extreme confinement systems such as gestation crates, veal crates and battery cages. The science is clear that these three systems of confinement are detrimental to the welfare of animals and should be phased out. In fact, recognizing these systems as inhumane, six states have passed legislation phasing out some of these methods of confinement.

For example, this legislation requires the Department of Agriculture to adopt the United Egg Producers-Animal Husbandry Guidelines for egg-laying hens. The United Egg Producers is a

discredited trade organization with a sordid history of consumer fraud and animal cruelty. The “UEP Certified” program allows hens to be confined in cages that provide each animal less space than a sheet of paper to spend her entire life. This standard for battery cage egg production is illegal throughout the European Union and California (both with a phase-out). California’s criminalization of battery cages is a result of the November’s passage of the Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act, a ballot measure that received more votes than any citizen initiative in California’s history.

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) ruled in 2003 (and upheld in 2004) that the UEP was misleading consumers about animal welfare. Even more, 17 attorneys general asserted that the UEP was falsely advertising animal welfare claims. The UEP paid \$100,000 to settle those AGs’ claims. And the UEP is the defendant in more than 20 consolidated class action lawsuits for illegal price fixing. The UEP couldn’t be less credible regarding animal welfare or public trust.

Additionally, H.B. 5127 requires the Department of Agriculture to adopt the National Chicken Council’s Animal Welfare Guidelines. Renowned farm animal scientist Dr. Temple Grandin—perhaps the most respected animal scientist in the country—asserts that “the National Chicken Council Animal Welfare audit has a scoring system that is so lax that [it] allows plants or farms with really bad practices to pass.” Mandating the adoption of these inhumane industry standards is bad for family farmers, bad for the environment, bad for animal welfare, and simply poor public policy.

H.B. 5127 -- Preempting Local Ordinances

Lastly, H.B. 5127 also would preempt all local ordinances and regulations regarding the treatment of farm animals—lawmaking at its worst because it attempts to preempt the rights of cities and counties to make judgments about what regulations are most appropriate for their jurisdiction. This is a special interest power-grab designed to undermine the wishes of local citizens and communities concerned about food safety, public health, animal welfare, and the environment.

Conclusion

These anti-democratic bills are designed to circumvent the input of all citizens of Michigan into the process and divert attention from serious reform. I urge you to oppose these bills, and instead, to support efforts to take a serious look at factory farming practices in Michigan. All animals deserve humane treatment, including animals raised for food.